



# NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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## Improving Public Education in the State Budget

When I announced my candidacy for the state Assembly, there were a handful of things I pledged to tackle if I were to be lucky enough to be elected. One of those items was finding ways to reinvest and renew our state's support in public education.

Knowing that much of this conversation would be centered on our state's next budget, I've spent my first several months in office crisscrossing the district to tour our schools and meet with administrators and parents. My goal was to see the success stories and work to better understand challenges facing our schools.

Now working its way through the legislative review process, I'm proud to have championed several initiatives in the state's next budget that will help our schools make investments in the classrooms and deliver the services our children need and deserve.

When I brought the feedback I received in our district with me to Madison, one of the findings I shared with my colleagues was that no two schools are exactly alike. However, one commonality that I found in speaking with our area schools was a universal need for increased student aid.

On this front, I'm proud to say we delivered.

Unlike the governor's initial proposal that reduced per pupil aid, I supported a plan that not only wiped out the proposed reduction, but actually increased the state's investment in schools by \$100 per student. Statewide, that math adds up to be an increased investment of \$200 million.

That's real money that can be used to make a real difference in our classrooms.

Additionally, one of the unique challenges that our schools face is the rural nature of our communities, sometimes spanning over hundreds of square miles. This means our districts bear a higher cost in helping to transport our children to and from school each day.

Recognizing that unique challenge, the reform package I supported that's now included in the budget not only provides an additional \$5 million to help rural districts offset increasing transportation costs, but it also increases sparsity aid by \$8.4 million.

Since we know that K-12 is only part of our state's robust public education system, I've also worked to make sure our students have access to the preparatory and secondary courses they need to successfully enter the workforce.



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During a recent visit to Sparta High School, I had a chance to see how the school was using a partnership with UW-Richland County to give their students a leg up. As I learned, these high school students were actually able to receive college credit while taking advanced level courses. While these courses helped to reduce tuition for students and give them a jumpstart on their college careers, the program was in jeopardy of being cut because of the high administrative costs the Sparta district was bearing.

I'm proud to say that working in conjunction with our UW System, a compromise was reached that will allow schools like Sparta to maintain these course offerings without bearing an unfair cost burden in administering them.

Not only that, but I'm pleased to say we've worked to extend the tuition freeze on all UW campuses – helping to make college more affordable and attainable for families in our communities.

My point in telling you all this is to hopefully demonstrate how committed I remain to finding ways to help our public school systems. Although I wish I had more space to touch on all the great things this budget does for our students, I think that many of the items I've mentioned here showcase just some of the positive changes being made for the future of our state.

As a small businesswoman, I realize how important it is that we live and spend within our means. But as an aunt of several public school students, just like you, I want to see my family members receive the finest education possible.

Balancing these priorities with the many other needs and services provided through the state isn't always the easiest work, but I remain committed to finding ways to make this the best budget it can be for Wisconsin and our children.

*Nancy VanderMeer represents the 70<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin State Assembly District, which includes portions of Monroe, Jackson, Portage and Wood counties.*